

And God spoke all these words saying: I am the Lord your God. Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six day you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your man servant or your maid servant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the ~~saventhxday~~ sabbath day and hallowed it.

Grace and peace to you from God our father and our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some years ago we sent out a questionnaire, checking on interest in a Saturday evening worship service in the summer months. The responses were mostly negative. But one response which came with a number of the questionnaires caused me to chuckle. In a variety of ways people said, We can't have a Saturday night service because God has commanded, Remember the sabbath Day to keep it holy.

The sabbath is Saturday. The seventh Day. Not Sunday, the first.

All of which only goes to show how confused we American Lutherans sometimes are about this commandment. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

For the ~~Jews~~ ^{Israelites} who were given this commandment the meaning was clear and simple. From Sundown Friday to Sundown Saturday no work could be done, the seventh day was ^{the} a sabbath, a day of rest devoted to God.

Jesus observed the sabbath, as did his disciples, though it was over the interpretation of this commandment that Jesus came into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders most often. When he healed on the sabbath, when his disciples plucked grain as they walked along there was conflict. The Pharisees criticized him for doing what God's law forbid.

After Jesus resurrection on a Sunday morning his followers gathered on what came to be called the Lord's Day. And it came to be understood that Jesus followers were no longer bound by God's law given to the Israelites.

So we worship on Sunday. And we understand that the third command has not to do with work or not working, but with worship. Luther teaches in the Small ~~catechism~~ ^{catechism} that we are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his word and the preaching of it but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

This is the chief service that we can do for God. Above all other services that we perform for our brothers and sisters in this world, this service of preaching and hearing God's word is the highest. That his word might be proclaimed and heard God raised up the prophets, Do do and proclaim and be God's word to his creatures God wrapped his son in human flesh and let him be crushed by suffering and death. For his word God raised up Paul and all the apostles, St. Augustine and St. Francis and Martin Luther, all whom God empowered so that his **Words** might reach his people. And now in this day God has raised up pastors and teachers and preachers that all his people in every place might hear and believe and obey his word. And God has provided this building and other houses of worship ~~in this town~~ that his word might be proclaimed and heard. This is the chief service we can do for God, for which he has so amply provided.

For all of us there is great responsibility in this. For me as I preach the responsibility is to proclaim Christ. God has called me to this task, he has promised to supply all that is needed in this task through the Holy Spirit.

For you there is responsibility to see that you are where the word is preached. More important than your work, your leisure, your rest, more important than your prayers or your good deeds is this, that you be where God's word is proclaimed. By your absence you demonstrate not a criticism of the preacher, but a disdain for the Lord himself who supplies this gift of his word. God has promised to speak in this place through his word that is proclaimed.

For you there is also the responsibility to listen. ~~And~~ I the pastor

am accountable to God for the words that I speak in his behalf. Paul makes it clear that God will judge those entrusted with the task of proclaiming his word. So he will also judge you whom he has called to hear his word. He who has ears to hear let him hear was Jesus repeated word and warning. That means you. This is not entertainment, it is God, creator of all the universe wrapping himself in the fleshy words that come from this mouth to enter you and make you new. I must preach his word, you must open your hearts to that word that is preached, not sitting in judgement of it as human words but letting God's word that comes to you from this sinful human being create faith and hope and love within you. God will judge me for what I speak, you for what you hear. God will judge, not we.

But know this. God's word is a powerful word. This weak and common sounding word that proceeds from this average example of humanity can transform you and me and through us this whole world. Where God's word is proclaimed, where ears are opened to it there God's kingdom touches the earth and makes all things new.

Remember the sabbath day to keep it Holy. We are too fearful and love God so that we do not neglect his word and the preaching of it but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it. Help us to do this Lord. Amen.